Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Directorate of
Intelligence

~~Secret~~

25X1

India:
Nuclear Debates and
Decisionmakers

25X1

A Research Paper

~~Secret~~

NESA 86-10011
February 1986

Copy 247

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

25X1
Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Page Denied

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Directorate of
Intelligence

Secret

25X1

India:
Nuclear Debates and
Decisionmakers

25X1

A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, with a contribution from Office of Central Reference. It was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations.

25X1
25X1
25X1

Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Issues and Applications Division, NESA,

25X1

Secret
NESA 86-10011
February 1986

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

India: Nuclear Debates and Decisionmakers [redacted] 25X1

Key Judgments

Information available as of 3 February 1986 was used in this report.

Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, like his predecessors, holds the Cabinet's nuclear portfolio and is the focal point for major nuclear decisions. Since coming to office, he has persistently drawn attention to the threat that Pakistan's nuclear program poses to India's national security. He would prefer to find a diplomatic and political solution to the nuclear dilemma in the subcontinent, since he does not want to divert scarce Indian resources to a nuclear weapons program. [redacted] 25X1

Gandhi's decisionmaking style is consultative and conciliatory. On nuclear issues he receives advice from a wide range of political appointees, opinion makers, and scientists. Indian Government officials and opinion makers are divided in their views on nuclear weapons, although proweapons advocates are more vocal than in the past. [redacted] 25X1

India's relatively free press and extensive professional cadre of civil servants, scientists, and military strategists encourage lively discussion of the nuclear options and set the climate for policy debate and formulation. Although there is no unanimity in official opinion, public opinion and the press increasingly favor building a nuclear deterrent. [redacted] 25X1

New Delhi will be slow to come to a decision on the troublesome nuclear issue and will be extremely reluctant to make any decision public. A large-scale, highly publicized weapons program would entail major diplomatic and economic costs, and India's democratic traditions will ensure that all sides have an opportunity to contribute to—and drag out—the debate. [redacted] 25X1

Although India demonstrated a nuclear explosive capability in 1974, it has steadfastly maintained that its nuclear research and energy program is peaceful and has resisted demands to start a nuclear weapons program. New Delhi's resolve, however, is being eroded by increasing evidence of nuclear weapons capability in Pakistan. [redacted] 25X1

If Pakistan were to give undeniable evidence of its nuclear weapons capability, or if China were to deploy nuclear weaponry in a manner to threaten India, there would be overwhelming public support in India for a nuclear weapons program. [redacted] 25X1

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

25X1

Even if India and Pakistan were to reach a bilateral understanding without submitting to international safeguards, New Delhi could still undertake a small, covert nuclear weapons program. This is probably India's most attractive option, since it would preserve plausible denial, be economically feasible, and could be kept proportionate to Pakistan's program.

25X1

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3 25X1

Contents

	Page
Key Judgments	iii
New Focus to the Nuclear Debate	1
Hardliners	3
Moderates	3
The Advisers—Splintered Opinion	3
The Inner Circle	5
New Delhi's Scientists	6
Bureaucratic Equities	7
Department of Atomic Energy	8
Ministry of External Affairs	8
Ministry of Defense	8
Committee on National Security	9
Nonofficial Influences	9
Public Opinion	10
Opposition Parties	10
The Press	10
Outlook	10
Implications for the United States	11
Alternative Scenario	12

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

25X1

India: Nuclear Debates and Decisionmakers

25X1

Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi announced in June 1985 that—in view of Pakistan's nuclear ambitions—India was being forced to review its commitment to a peaceful nuclear program, long the cornerstone of New Delhi's nuclear policy. Although India detonated what New Delhi termed was a "peaceful nuclear explosion" in 1974, that nation is internationally identified with the worldwide nuclear disarmament movement and a widely publicized moral stand against nuclear weaponry. New Delhi, however, has kept its options open by refusing to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and publicly stating its intention to maintain an option to acquire nuclear weapons.

25X1

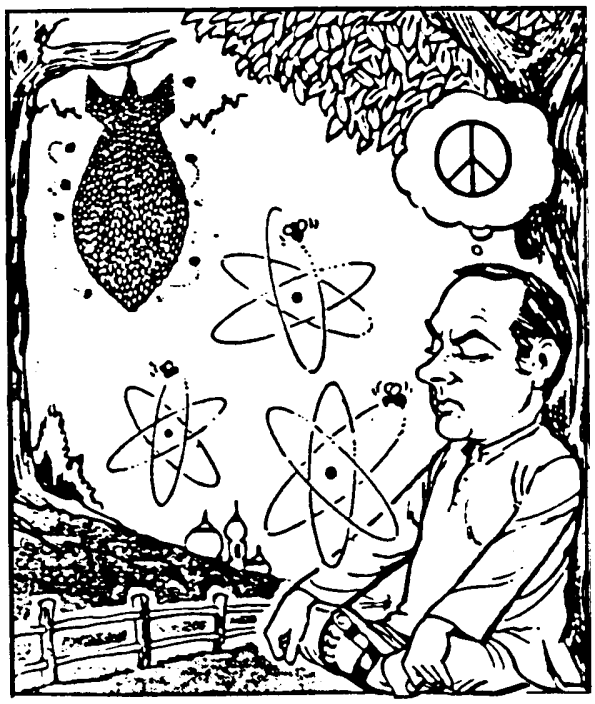
Since coming to office in November 1984, Gandhi has made clear, as no previous Prime Minister has, that India must respond to the change in the military balance that a nuclear-capable Pakistan would create. Gandhi has been persistent in searching for an appropriate response to Pakistan's progress. He has made frequent public comments about the economic cost of a nuclear weapons program and the military difficulties of adapting to nuclear warfare.

25X1

25X1

Gandhi's raising the issue has exposed a lack of consensus within the government and thrown the debate on nuclear weapons into sharper relief. The Indian newspapers' front page stories and columnists have begun to discuss in earnest the pros and cons of nuclear weapons development and have criticized the Prime Minister for his inability to resolve the issue. Some members of Gandhi's Congress Party and other political parties have demanded that the government launch a nuclear weapons program.

25X1



Rajiv Gandhi's nuclear dilemma

25X1

New Focus to the Nuclear Debate

Since the Chinese nuclear test of 1964, India has had pro- and anti-bomb lobbies. The dominant antibomb forces believed that India's moral stand against nuclear weaponry should serve as a model for the world. The probomb advocates argued that India needed nuclear arms as a deterrent to the threat from China and as a means for India to take its rightful place as a world power.

25X1

25X1

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Indicators of an Indian Nuclear Weapons Program

We do not believe New Delhi has sanctioned a large-scale nuclear weapons program, but India retains the capability to do so on short notice. India detonated a nuclear device in the Thar Desert in 1974—the "peaceful nuclear explosion." Analysis of the research of key Indian nuclear scientists indicates that, until 1977, they worked on theoretical problems that have weapons applications and on the diagnostics of the 1974 test. India's large program of civil nuclear power and research and development also gives it an ample basis from which to develop a nuclear weapons effort. Stockpiles of plutonium and recent advances in plutonium-producing research reactors and fast-breeder reactors will give India the advantage over Pakistan in fissile material production.

If India were to initiate a major nuclear weapons program, which we define as a development and testing program leading to deployment of several small nuclear weapons, we might expect to detect the following indicators:

- *Testing of the high-explosives components of nuclear weapons, probably at Chandigarh.*
- *Growing contacts between personnel of the Department of Atomic Energy and the military to establish weapons requirements and characteristics and to administer a hardware development program.*
- *Stepped-up efforts to procure abroad specialized materials, components, and equipment for weapons production and for the civil nuclear program in anticipation of a foreign nuclear suppliers' boycott.*
- *Reassignment of key personnel within the nuclear establishment to new duties or locations.*
- *A nuclear test, probably at the Thar Desert site, to provide new technical data or more conclusive proof that technical development objectives had been achieved.*

25X1 25X1

We have observed none of these activities, but we believe India could have a nuclear device ready for testing and could proceed rapidly with an underground test on short notice.

25X1

25X1

25X1

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

During the last five years the dominance of the antiweapons forces has been assailed by growing ranks of hawks responding to the entry of Pakistan into the nuclear arena. A flurry of books and films alleging that Pakistan was building an "Islamic bomb" appeared in India. The allegations were given added credibility in Indian eyes when the United States invoked the Symington Amendment and severed aid to Pakistan in 1979.[1] Press reports last summer that Pakistan illegally obtained and used US-made krytron triggers for a test of the nonfissile components of a nuclear device intensified Indian concern.

A lively debate over the circumstances that should trigger a nuclear weapons program has replaced the militant pro- and anti-weapons arguments of the 1960s and 1970s. The introduction of the Pakistani angle has given the discussion a new twist, and, to most Indians, the question is no longer whether but when India should acquire nuclear arms. Arguments of the antiweapons forces have moderated considerably as more observers argue that India must be able to respond quickly and decisively to Pakistan's advances.

Hardliners

Proponents of an immediate nuclear weapons program have always argued that this would not only counter a Chinese nuclear threat and a growing Pakistani weapons program but also would have wider international political benefits for India. They see a weapons program as a means to ensure India's rightful position in global power politics and to contribute to the strength of the Third World by redressing the gross imbalance of power between the developed and developing world. Many adherents of this view hold the opinion that nuclear weapons are tools of diplomacy and that the decision to develop them should not depend upon what Pakistan does. 25X1

Moderates

According to our analysis of the public debate, most moderates argue that India should initiate a weapons program only in response to undisputed evidence of a Pakistani nuclear weapons capability such as a nuclear test or a cutoff of US aid. Many adherents of this view acknowledge that a Pakistani explosion of a nuclear device would begin an expensive nuclear arms race in South Asia. There are very few Indians who would argue against nuclear weapons in the face of a demonstrated Pakistani nuclear capability. 25X1 25X1

India's consistently held anti-nuclear-weapons posture suggests that most policymakers are moderates on nuclear issues, and 25X1 policymakers base their opinions on a pragmatic assessment of the economic and diplomatic costs. 25X1, a weapons program that includes sophisticated delivery systems would triple the defense budget. 25X1 25X1 25X1 Indian opinion makers have argued that a weapons program would seriously undermine India's credibility in international forums and the Nonaligned Movement, as well as the credibility of the disarmament movement, with which New Delhi is closely associated. 25X1 25X1

The Advisers—Splintered Opinion

Rajiv Gandhi's key advisers do not agree on the appropriate response to Pakistan's growing nuclear capability (see foldout). Although we do not have good evidence of the views of all his intimate advisers, it is 25X1

[1] The Symington Amendment provides for the cutoff of foreign assistance to any country importing uranium enrichment technology for unsafeguarded nuclear facilities. In April 1979, as a result of the publication of news regarding Pakistan's unsafeguarded uranium enrichment facility at Kahuta, all US assistance to that country was cut off. In 1981 the provisions of the Symington Amendment were amended, allowing Congress to waive the law if US national security interests were jeopardized—as they were believed to be when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. If Congress has reason to believe Pakistan is obtaining weapons-grade uranium or if that country tests a nuclear device, Congress can reinvoke the cutoff of US aid.

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

India's Policy Options

Over the years Indian policymakers have defined several nuclear policy alternatives that are supported by various government bodies and officials. These options, not mutually exclusive, continue to be argued in the press and policy circles:

- ***Do nothing.*** [redacted] 25X1 25X1

[redacted] *Recent Indian press reports that Pakistan tested the nonfissile components of a detonation system have led Indian observers to conclude that Pakistan may not need a full-blown nuclear test to have confidence in the reliability of a nuclear weapon design.* 25X1

- ***A preemptive strike on Pakistan's nuclear facilities.*** *Gandhi's and Zia's joint announcement in December 1985 not to attack each other's nuclear facilities would presumably negate this option. Gandhi in numerous public interviews had already disavowed a preemptive strike as contrary to Indian principles as well as incapable of guaranteeing the elimination of all enriched uranium that may be stockpiled. We believe that New Delhi has military contingency plans to carry out such an attack, although some Indian strategists are concerned that the inevitable Pakistani retaliatory attack on Indian nuclear facilities would spread radioactive contamination over large portions of India.*

- ***Mutual no-first-strike pledge.*** *In late July 1985, K. Subrahmanyam proposed in an article published in the* Times of India *that both countries develop confidence-building measures that would culminate in the acceptance of a pledge not to use nuclear weapons against each other. Initial steps in the process would include a pledge not to attack each other's nuclear facilities (agreed to in December 1985) and the accession by Pakistan to the environmental modification convention and the partial test ban treaty. Ultimately, the pact would allow each side to retain its weapons option and would not involve mutual inspection of facilities.*

Cartoonist's depiction of cynicism about the Gandhi-Zia pledge not to attack each other's nuclear facilities. [redacted] 25X1

- ***Move under the nuclear umbrella of a superpower.*** *This idea first appeared, and was rejected, in the 1960s when a faction within the Ministry of External Affairs supported the acceptance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and a security guarantee from the United States. The ruling Congress Party has publicly indicated as recently as August 1985 that it continues to believe India should not depend upon another power to safeguard its sovereignty.*

- ***A weapons program.*** *This option generates the most debate and is perceived by many Indians to be the only workable alternative.*

- ***Accept the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.*** *New Delhi's official policy is never to accept the Non-Proliferation Treaty, since it is viewed as discriminatory to nonnuclear weapons states and would force India to put all nuclear facilities under full-scope safeguards.* [redacted] 25X1 25X1

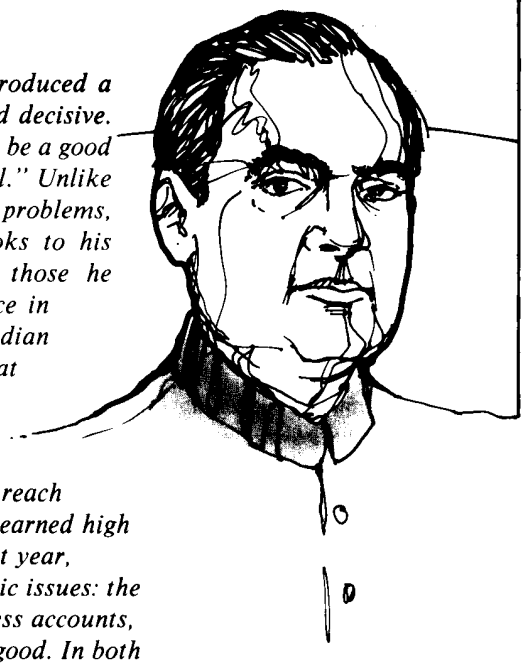
[redacted]

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Rajiv's Decisionmaking Style

According to most Indian observers, Rajiv Gandhi has introduced a new style of decisionmaking to India. He is consultative and decisive. According to an Indian opinion poll, he is widely perceived to be a good crisis manager. He has termed himself "nonconfrontational." Unlike Indira Gandhi, who procrastinated, Rajiv is quick to identify problems, examine the issues, and seek workable solutions. He looks to his advisers for facts and options and seeks counsel from those he considers experts—often professionals who had no influence in his mother's circle. According to a US Embassy report, Indian officials say that Gandhi often asks detailed questions that reveal a thorough understanding of technical concepts.



25X1

Gandhi has surprised observers with his prompt attempts to reach sometimes bold solutions to major policy problems and has earned high ratings in a recent Indian public opinion poll. Within his first year, Gandhi concluded accords on two highly contentious domestic issues: the Punjab crisis and Assam. In both instances, according to press accounts, he sacrificed his party's political advantage for the nation's good. In both instances he introduced unexpected proposals to bring movement toward solution.

25X1

308021 2-86

clear their opinions range from those hesitant to take any steps now to at least one adviser who sees advantages in both India and Pakistan having nuclear weapons.

The Inner Circle

Arun Singh, Minister of State for Defense Research and Development, is the Prime Minister's most trusted adviser, according to the Indian press. Singh is responsible for a large network of defense research establishments that will interact closely with the civil nuclear program in the event of a decision to acquire nuclear weapons. He has been involved in high-level discussions with the Pakistanis on nuclear matters.

The Indian press speculates that one reason Gandhi appointed Singh is to ensure that he had a trusted official in a key post in the event of a decision to launch a nuclear weapons program. Singh's position in the Ministry of Defense makes him responsible for India's external security. Since Gandhi holds the Defense Ministry portfolio, many political observers believe that Singh will function as de facto Minister of Defense.

25X1

G. Parthasarthy's longevity in government—he is currently head of the Policy Planning Committee of the Ministry of External Affairs—combined with his personal relationship with the Gandhi family, probably ensures him a place in discussions on nuclear matters. Parthasarthy is the titular head of the influential South Indian Brahman circle, among whose members, three—Raja Ramanna, K. Subrahmanyam, and V. S. Arunachalam—are also nuclear advisers, according to the US Embassy. Although diplomatic sources in New Delhi predicted that Parthasarthy would not last long in Rajiv's government because of his leftist orientation, he has been involved in all major talks with Pakistan, including nuclear discussions. Parthasarthy was involved in the decision to conduct the 1974 test of a nuclear device, and his comments that New Delhi did not fully calculate the political and economic costs of the event

25X1

25X1

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

suggest that he would be cautious about the costs of a nuclear weapons program.

Romesh Bhandari, the Foreign Secretary, is a relative newcomer to nuclear decisionmaking circles. According to US Embassy reporting, Bhandari, who is slated to retire soon, takes part, with Parthasarthy, in all the Indo-Pakistani nuclear discussions and probably advises on tactics and diplomacy. Before becoming Foreign Secretary, Bhandari said that he did not believe India could live with a nuclear Pakistan, according to the US Embassy.

The widely accepted spokesman for the probomb lobby, ***K. Subrahmanyam,*** is an important Gandhi adviser on strategic issues. Subrahmanyam, a career Indian Administrative Service officer, director of the Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, and recently appointed member of India's new National Security Board, his views on Indian nuclear aims have little to do with Pakistani nuclear developments, according to a US academic who follows nuclear issues. He has long held that India, to position itself properly in the global order and to demonstrate its abilities relative to China, should have a nuclear weapons program. Subrahmanyam uses the specter of a nuclear Pakistan to gain support for his opinions, but he believes that India and Pakistan would benefit from the resulting balance of power if both states controlled nuclear weapons.

In recent publications, Subrahmanyam—in reaction to the announcement by Pakistan that it could enrich uranium—has urged that India justify its own weapons program and project an image that it "may be harboring some bombs in the basement with the last wire yet to be connected."

Subrahmanyam is considered by the Indian press as well as Western academics to have the best access to India's nuclear and security issues experts. We believe that Subrahmanyam—who writes regularly for the influential *Times of India*—frequently tests ideas for government policy options in his news column.

25X1
25X1
25X1

New Delhi's Scientists

We believe that Gandhi is receptive to the advice of scientists. US Embassy reporting suggests that he is probably in fairly regular contact with key members of the scientific community.

25X1
25X1

Raja Ramanna, chairman of the Department of Atomic Energy and the Indian Atomic Energy Commission, and scientific adviser to the Ministry of Defense, 1978-80, consults with Gandhi regularly and is one of his closest advisers on nuclear issues. According to the US Embassy in New Delhi, Ramanna retains his longstanding reputation as a hawk on nuclear weapons.

25X1
25X1
25X1

Ramanna has administrative and planning control over both research and development and current operations of India's nuclear establishment. As the architect of the 1974 nuclear test, Ramanna has been kept in office because of his long experience and expertise despite the fact that he is beyond mandatory retirement age. We believe that the Department of Atomic Energy will have considerable difficulty meeting its overly ambitious nuclear power goal of 22 indigenously developed power plants by the turn of the century, and Ramanna may push more forcefully for a nuclear weapons program to deflect attention from the failing civil nuclear program.

25X1
25X1
25X1

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

V. S. Arunachalam, the scientific adviser to the Ministry of Defense, is one of the key participants in nuclear decisionmaking, according to the US Embassy in New Delhi. The Embassy reports that Arunachalam not only has Rajiv's attention on defense-related nuclear issues and gets on well with Arun Singh, but is also well connected to the South Indian Brahman circle in New Delhi. By virtue of his position, Arunachalam oversees some 70 defense laboratories and would be an important contact point between the Ministry of Defense and a program guiding nuclear weapons research and development. His ability to deal effectively with foreign defense industrialists has earned him widespread respect and allegiance within the Ministry of Defense. For over 15 years he has worked on the fringes of the atomic energy program, and he has extensive contacts within that establishment.

Arunachalam often represents India on technology and nuclear applications issues and, the Embassy reports, is a skilled proponent of his country's interests. In our judgment, Arunachalam's interest in improving India's access to Western high technology will make him reluctant to support a nuclear weapons program that would sever the links he has so carefully forged. He has been the bridge between the US position and Raja Ramanna, the head of the Atomic Energy Commission, on the nuclear assurances package in the Memorandum of Understanding with the United States.[2] Arunachalam indicated to US officials that only he and Foreign Secretary Bhandari could give the assurances package the backing it needed to go through the necessary Cabinet committee meeting.

According to the US Embassy, ***M. G. K. Menon*** is one of New Delhi's most important scientific advisers on nuclear matters. We believe that he counsels against nuclear weapons. Menon, another South Indian, was close to Indira Gandhi and appears to get along well with Rajiv Gandhi. As one of five members of the Planning Commission responsible for government scientific programs, he has a major voice in the allocation of funds. He is also chairman of the Cabinet's Scientific Advisory Committee and, like Ramanna and Arunachalam, has served as scientific adviser to the Ministry of Defense. Menon is one of India's most renowned scientists and represents India on almost every international scientific committee and commission. During the discussions with the United States on nuclear assurances, Menon on occasion substituted for Arunachalam. 25X1

We believe that Gandhi has retained ***Homi Sethna,*** chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, during 1970-83, as a personal adviser on nuclear affairs. 25X1

25X1

Sethna wants the nuclear establishment to focus on Indian energy needs rather than a weapons program. Retired in 1983, Sethna was a close adviser to Indira Gandhi, who kept him as a personal scientific adviser until her death. 25X1

25X1

Bureaucratic Equities

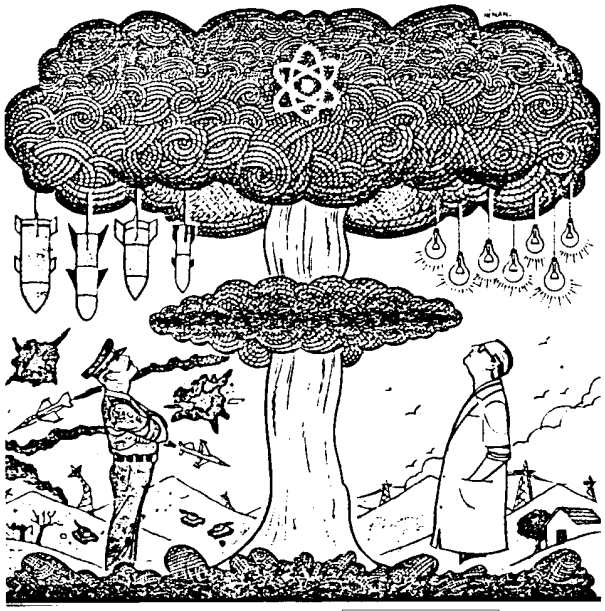
We have not identified a unified opinion on nuclear weapons within India's labyrinthine bureaucracy whose support will be vital for the success of a weapons program. Entrenched cadres of civil servants who have to advise on and implement policy can actively advance or undermine government aims. The Department of Atomic Energy and the Ministries of External Affairs and Defense will bear the major burdens of planning and implementing policy if the government decides to embark on a nuclear weapons program. 25X1

25X1

[2] The US-Indian Memorandum of Understanding on Technology Transfer, signed on 29 November 1984, was designed to further a more cooperative technology transfer procedure for India by standardizing procedures for protecting US technology and establishing a routine for the rapid clearance by the United States of Indian export requests. Technology transfer items negotiated are subject to nuclear assurances – or pledges not to use the items in nuclear facilities – negotiated with the Government of India. 25X1

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3



Bureaucratic aims for nuclear energy

Department of Atomic Energy

The Department of Atomic Energy, which has a major nuclear policy role because of its monopoly on technical and scientific expertise, is split between weapons advocates and opponents:

- The majority of middle-level scientists at Bhabha Atomic Research Center probably still hold the views that they expressed in 1979-80 that India should not start a nuclear weapons program even if Pakistan's nuclear goals were far advanced.

- younger scientists appealed to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in mid-1980 for India to change its nuclear policy and develop a weapons option to counter Pakistan. many Bhabha Atomic Research Center scientists were disappointed that she did not adopt their suggestion.

Some members of the nuclear establishment will be disaffected if India undertakes a large nuclear weapons program. Currently, the civil nuclear power program consumes close to 75 percent of the entire departmental budget, according to published department reports. A nuclear weapons program would probably drain resources from the power program, causing scientists associated with it to lose status and research opportunities. According to US Embassy reporting, a number of scientists in the power program support accepting international safeguards on the power program to enable India to import Western technology and know-how. Launching a weapons program would cut them off entirely from Western technology. 25X1

Ministry of External Affairs 25X1

The Ministry of External Affairs is unlikely to lobby for a nuclear weapons program. the Ministry is dominated by an antiweapons, pro–Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty group. Krishnan Rasgotra, Foreign Secretary during 1983-85, recently was quoted in the Indian press as saying that New Delhi was making too much noise about Pakistan's nuclear program, since it could never pose a significant threat to India. We believe many officers are in a dilemma, since they are only lukewarm supporters of improved relations with Pakistan—the only alternative to a nuclear weapons program.

25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1

Ministry of Defense

An Indian decision to embark on a nuclear weapons program to counter Pakistani nuclear developments would be supported by the military. We do not believe, however, that the military is actively lobbying for a nuclear weapons program or is likely to do so in the near future. the Defense Ministry cannot initiate discussions on strategic issues, except

25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

those dealing with territorial defense, with the Ministry of External Affairs, or the Prime Minister's secretariat. The Defense Ministry is consulted only on issues that relate to "military implications" of a particular issue.

The military has outmoded training in nuclear theater operations and little sophisticated understanding of nuclear weapons, The most advanced understanding we have observed has come from newly appointed Army Chief of Staff Gen. Krishnaswamy Sundarji. Sundarji has conducted theoretical work on strategic and tactical implications of nuclear weapons and, in 1981, organized two highly unusual military seminars on nuclear weapons. According to a US scholar, Sundarji has well-focused views on doctrinal matters and the relationship of nuclear to conventional weapons and would probably be the military's point man in political discussions on aspects of a nuclear weapons program.

Indian military officers are concerned about how a nuclear program would be financed and controlled and how it would affect conventional forces, according to a US scholar:

- Military officers fear that the costs of a nuclear weapons program and delivery system would absorb a significant portion of the military budget, causing conventional arms and readiness to suffer and leading to a probable overall reduction in forces.
- Operating in a nuclear theater would demand greater mobility and specialized protective gear, leading to significant changes in the Indian Army's mechanization efforts.
- The individual services are worried about which service would assume control of the weapons. The Army fears its influence would be diminished if New Delhi approved air delivery of the weapons.

Gen. K. Sundarji

Nonofficial Influences

Nuclear policy in India has been shaped by an elite group, but we believe policymakers will not ignore a widespread clamor for nuclear weapons by the public,

25X1
25X1
25X1
25X1
25X1
25X1
25X1

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

the press, and opposition groups—all of which play an influential role in the debate as India confronts evidence of Pakistan's nuclear intentions.

Public Opinion

The public at large favors a nuclear weapons program. According to an Indian public opinion survey published in July 1985, 72 percent of the literate urban population believed India should develop its own independent nuclear capability. A majority of those surveyed believe Pakistan is likely to develop nuclear weapons in the next few years and that India should follow suit. A recent *India Today* survey on Gandhi's first year gauged the Prime Minister approvingly as "probomb." We believe the rural electorate—traditionally conservative—mirrors these views.

Opposition Parties

More political parties are becoming involved in the nuclear debate. The conservative Jan Sangh has always favored nuclear weapons, and last summer the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—an offshoot of the Jan Sangh—revived the demand, making it a plank in its political platform. The regional populist party Telugu Desam, the BJP, the Lok Dal, and various members of the Congress Party demanded in Parliament late last summer that the government launch a weapons program. India's Communist parties do not agree on nuclear weapons. According to the Indian press, the pro-Moscow Communist Party–India calls for India to stand firmly by its traditional opposition to nuclear weapons. On the other hand, the Communist Party–Marxist has said that India must retain the nuclear weapons option.

The Press

Increasing allegations by the Government of India on the progress of Pakistan's nuclear program are causing some of the press to move away from a traditional dovish stand. Newspapers in English and the vernacular call for New Delhi to guarantee India's security with nuclear weapons. The *Times of India* publishes a column by Subrahmanyam that showcases the hawk viewpoint. On the other hand, the *Indian Express* and *India Today* counsel caution and diplomacy as answers to the nuclear dilemma. According to an academic who follows Indian affairs, Gandhi is a devoted

Bhabani Sen Gupta

reader of *India Today*. The pro-Moscow *Patriot* favors retention of the weapons option as an Indian nationalist symbol, although it supports disarmament as global policy. The *Patriot* blames Pakistan's progress on the United States and implies active US assistance to Islamabad for the nuclear program.

Bhabani Sen Gupta, an influential journalist, leading spokesman for the antiweapons forces, and research professor at the Center for Policy Research, publishes a regular column in the influential newsmagazine *India Today*. According to a US scholar, Sen Gupta's views—especially on issues of regional security—are well known and respected throughout India's foreign policy community. Academics who have interviewed Sen Gupta believe that he, like many moderates, supports a strong defense for India and would endorse a nuclear weapons program if India faced a threat to its existence. In a public debate on the issue of nuclear weapons in May 1985, Sen Gupta supported a policy of ambivalence on nuclear weapons—leaving both Pakistan and the West guessing. Sen Gupta, however, prefers to emphasize nonnuclear options—diplomacy and accelerated economic development—rather than weapons acquisition to ensure a strong polity.

Outlook

The nuclear debate in India is likely to intensify over the next year. We cannot predict with any certainty what path decisionmakers will take. Pressures to

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

launch a nuclear weapons program are sporadic and generally responsive to external events such as the Chinese nuclear test in 1964 and the international nonproliferation debate in 1969-70.

Lack of a consensus and India's traditional slowness in coming to grips with intractable issues, in our view, argue against a dramatic decision. Longstanding democratic institutions and strongly held opinions will ensure that all parties will have an opportunity to make a case for the policy option they support.

Indian decisionmakers will also be cautious because of the costs and risks involved in a decision to become a nuclear weapons power. Gandhi's plans for India include steady modernization, which requires positive political and economic relationships with the West, but a nuclear weapons program would have adverse economic and political costs:

- Funding a major nuclear weapons program would require a shift of resources from some domestic programs, creating additional pressures on Gandhi's efforts to reduce growing budget deficits.
- Soft loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank would be more difficult to get in the face of US opposition.
- Indian access to high technology and scientific and technical exchanges—keys to reaching Gandhi's goal of taking India into the 21st century—would be impeded.
- Gandhi's recent rapprochement with the United States on sales of military equipment would be jeopardized.

Over the next year we expect Gandhi to continue to seek a dialogue with Pakistan. His self-confidence has been bolstered by domestic successes over the past year, and the informal agreement he reached with Zia in December 1985 not to attack each other's nuclear facilities may encourage him to try to negotiate a broader solution to the nuclear dilemma.

Even so, the intense mutual suspicions between India and Pakistan are likely to undermine, if not prevent, a negotiated agreement. We believe Pakistan's need to secure what it perceives as its ultimate defense against India—a nuclear weapon—will prompt Islamabad to stop well short of any verifiable agreement. 25X1

If New Delhi cannot reach a negotiated agreement with Islamabad, we believe that India will adopt a small-scale covert weapons program. Such a program would allow New Delhi to maintain plausible denial and avoid risking the loss of access to Western economic and technical assistance. This option would also be easier for Indian policymakers since it would not require major resource diversions. 25X1 25X1

If Pakistan tests a nuclear device, an event we regard as unlikely, Indian domestic pressure would almost certainly force New Delhi to launch a declared nuclear weapons program and perhaps to test a bigger and better device than that of Pakistan. In this atmosphere, the combination of New Delhi's basic suspicions of Pakistan and India's drive to be seen as the major South Asian power could make the region highly unstable. 25X1

Implications for the United States

Rajiv's genuine interest in finding a political solution to the issue of nuclear weapons on the subcontinent, combined with his advisers' inability to reach a consensus on the Indian nuclear option, may leave some role for the United States, especially in light of gradually improving Indo-US relations. Indian policymakers have long declared that the nuclear issue can only be solved bilaterally with Pakistan, but they also maintain that the United States must play a major role in blunting the Pakistani program. Subrahmanyam has suggested in the Indian press that the United States can promote mutual confidence by providing New Delhi with intelligence on the status of Pakistan's nuclear program. Under Rajiv, Indian officials have proved willing to listen to and discuss the issue 25X1

25X1

25X1

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

with other parties. We speculate that the late December agreement between Rajiv and Zia not to attack each other's nuclear facilities may have been prompted, at least in part, by US importunings in late 1985 that the nuclear issue be resolved between India and Pakistan.

Other analysts within the US Intelligence Community believe the December pledge, although congruent with US interests, resulted solely from Rajiv's long campaign to start a nuclear dialogue with Pakistan. These analysts point out that Gandhi's highly publicized concerns about Pakistan's nuclear program and his desire to develop confidence-building measures predate US involvement in the current round of talks. K. Subrahmanyam's idea for a confidence-building pledge not to attack each other's facilities first appeared in the summer of 1984 and was repeated in the Indian press in July 1985.

Indian policymakers may calculate that a small covert program—dubbed in New Delhi "the Israeli option"—would allow them uninterrupted cooperation with the United States and the West. In such a case, US nonproliferation policies would not be jeopardized publicly. If Pakistan tests a nuclear device, however, we believe India would not let its interest in closer ties to the West stand in the way of its own publicly acknowledged program.

25X1

Alternative Scenario

Some analysts believe that India will eventually seek to halt the Pakistani program by launching a preemptive strike against Pakistan's nuclear facilities. These analysts argue that India will be compelled by its drive for regional hegemony to ensure that Pakistan remains unable to threaten India's national security. According to this scenario, New Delhi would order its military forces to bomb the Kahuta uranium enrichment facilities and the Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology. These analysts argue that such a strike would cause the collapse of President Zia's government, perhaps bringing to power a more pliable regime.

25X1

Other analysts believe that the probability of this scenario is low, largely because the traditional indecisiveness and caution exhibited by most Indian policymakers mitigate against such dramatic action. Some argue that the probability of a preemptive strike is particularly low under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi, who has said publicly that such a move would not ensure the eradication of fissile material and components. A preemptive strike would almost certainly begin a war between India and Pakistan and would scuttle Gandhi's desire for better regional relations as well as continued leadership of the Nonaligned Movement.

25X1

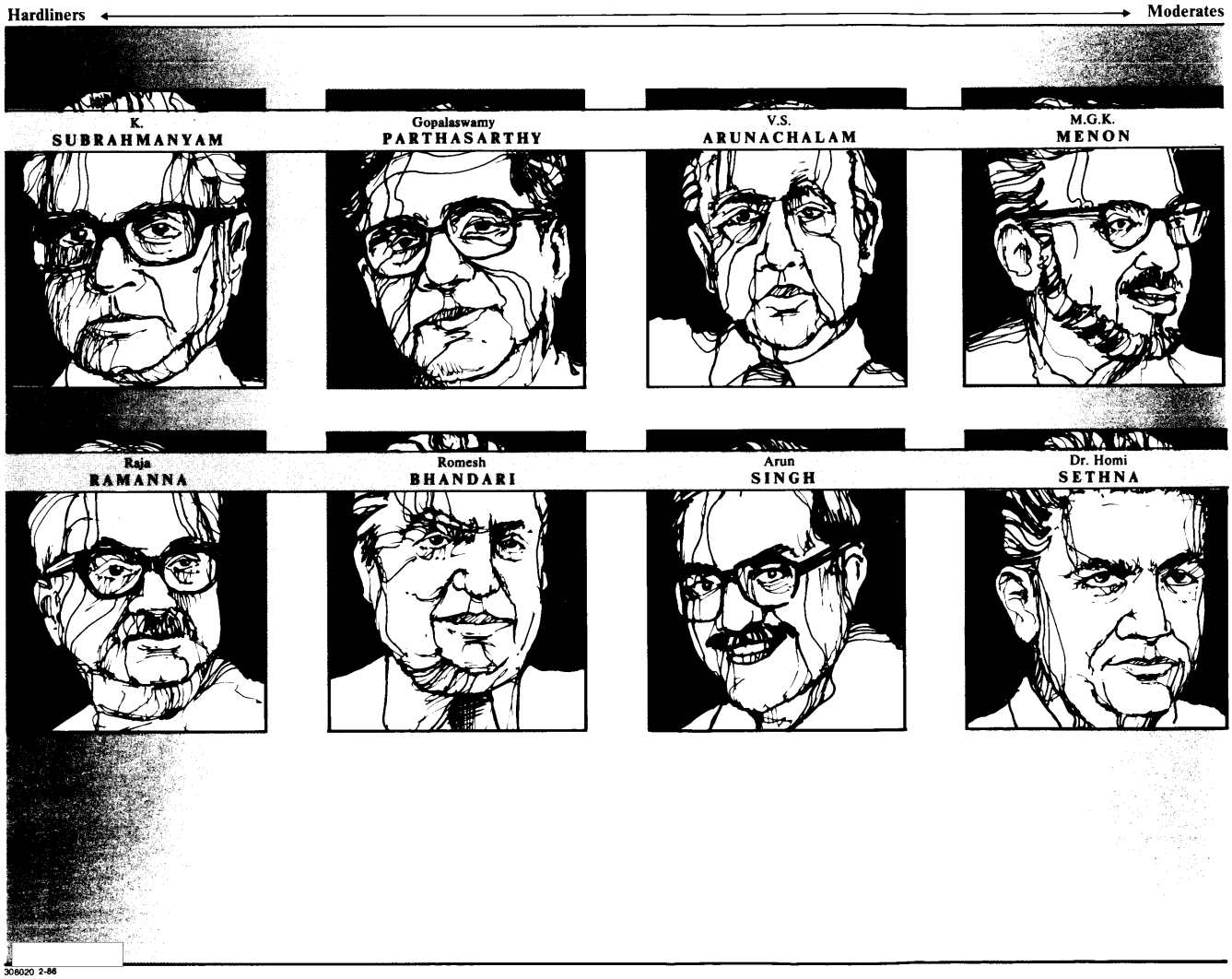
25X1

25X1

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Rajiv Gandhi's Key Nuclear Advisors



25X1

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/07/27 : CIA-RDP06T00412R000505160001-3